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ABSTRACT

Semi-rural first-married couples (N=29) seeking marital counseling from a small community mental health center were administered Cattell's Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF) as part of the intake procedure of the agency. Male and female mean scores for each of the 16 personality factors were derived and compared to the Cattell and Nesselroade (1967) means for unstable married couples. The mean profile for the males was significantly different on seven of the sixteen personality factors. For the females, nine of the sixteen proved significant. Differences were discussed in relation to the cultural influences of the community. The necessity of developing local norms when using psychometric instruments in marital counseling was called for. (Author)

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The Assessment of Marital Instability In A Semi-Rural Setting: Cultural Considerations

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Running head: Marital Instability

Abstract

Twenty-nine semi-rural first married couples seeking marital counseling from a small community mental health center were administered Cattell's Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF) as part of the intake procedure of the agency. Male and female mean scores for each of the 16 personality factors were derived and compared to the Cattell and Nesselroade (1967) means for unstable married couples. The mean profile for the males was significantly different on 7 of the 16 personality factors. For the females, 9 of the 16 proved significant. Differences were discussed in relation to the cultural influences of the community. The necessity of developing local norms when using psychometric instruments in marital counseling was called for.

The Assessment of Marital Instability In A Semi-Rural Setting: Cultural Considerations

Mental health professionals involved in marital counseling are aware of the importance of conceptualizing marriage as an interactional relationship. The marital counselor frequently focuses on the interpersonal relationships between the husband and wife and emphasizes the spousal relationship as the key to marital stability (Miller, Corrales & Wachman, 1975; Regula, 1975; Silverman, 1972; Travis & Travis, 1975). Research dealing with the spousal relationship suggests that the stability of the marital relationship is probably a function of the interplay between spousal personality attributes (Barton & Cattell, 1972; Byong-Hee, 1975; Cattell & Nesselroade, 1967).

Cattell, Eber, and Tatsuoka (1970) purport that the likeness and completion principles need to be considered when assessing marital stability in relation to spousal personality attributes. The likeness principle operates when assortive mating is evident, i.e., positive resemblances in ability, temperament and sentiments (Cattell, Eber, & Tatsuoka, 1970). Thus, spouses in stable marriages in comparison to spouses in unstable marriages (operationally defined as couples in counseling or contemplating dissolution) have been found to exhibit significantly more positive correlations between personality factors (Cattell & Nesselroade, 1967; Signori, Rempel & Pickford, 1968). However, Weigel, Weigel and Richardson (1973) were unable to find a positive relationship between the congruence of spousal personality factors and reported marital stability. The noted lack of agreement between studies is attributed to the restricted range or the homogeneity of the married couples available for research purposes (primarily college students).

The completion principle is posited to apply when one spouse supplies trait support to the other resulting in the adjustment of the two, as a unit,

to the environment (Cattell, Eber & Tatsuoka, 1970). Adherence to this principle is based upon the findings that stably married couples exhibit significantly more opposing adjustive traits (traits thought to be conducive to marital stability) when compared to the unstably married couples (Cattell & Nesselroade, 1967). However, the data of Signori, Rempel, and Pickford (1968) offers less support for the operability of the completion principle and suggests that if this principle is the basis for a marriage then it contributes to instability rather than stability. Cattell and Nesselroade (1968) suggest that the conflicting results are a function of the criteria used in the assignment of couples to groups (stable vs unstable) and the cultural differences of the parent populations.

In summary, the interplay of spousal personality traits has been found to be related to marital stability. Whether or not particular traits or the combination of spousal traits is negatively or positively related to marital stability is inconclusive. Rather, because of cultural differences, studies suggest the need of interpreting research findings in relation to the parent population from which the sample was drawn (Cattell & Nesselroade, 1968; Haavio-Mannita, 1971; Signori, Rempel & Pickford, 1968; Weigel, Weigel & Richardson, 1973). Thus, spousal personality traits thought to be indicative of marital instability in one culture will not necessarily be suggestive of instability in another and the interpretation of test data in relation to local norms is necessary.

The present study was based upon earlier findings by LeUnes (1975) and Segal (1973) that the mental health needs of the semi-rural community may differ from those of the urban community. The major hypothesis is that because of cultural differences associated with a semi-rural setting, spousal personality traits in relation to marital instability will be significantly different from those reported by Cattell and Nesselroade (1967).

Method

Twenty-nine first married couples seeking marital counseling from a small community mental health center (city population 10,000, county population 20,000) served as participants in this study. Each couple was individually administered Cattell's 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire Form A as part of the agency's intake procedure. Male and female mean scores for each of the 16 factors were derived. The means and standard deviations of these 16 factors, chronological age, and educational level are presented in Table 1. The socio-economic status of the couples was mainly middle class and lower middle class.

Insert Table 1 about here

The male and female mean scores (classified as sample means) were compared to Cattell and Nesselroade's (1967) means for unstably married couples (classified as population means). A comparison of a sample mean with a population mean was utilized in this analysis (Bernstein, 1964). Husband and wife intercorrelations on each of the sixteen factors were derived.

Results and Discussion

Table 2 indicates that the semi-rural male mean profile was significantly different on 7 of the 16 personality factors.

Insert Table 2 about here

Significantly larger mean score values on G(Super ego strength) and I (Premsia) were evident. The personality factors represented by E (Dominance), M(Autia), N(Shrewdness), Q_1 (Radicalism), and Q_2 (Self-sufficiency) resulted in signifcantly lower mean score values. For the semi-rural female, 9 of the 16 personality factors were significantly different (see Table 3).

Insert Table 3 about here

G(super ego strength), L (Protension), and O (guilt proneness) proved significantly larger in mean score value, with A (Affectothymia), C (Ego strength), I (Premsia), M (Autia), Q_1 (Radicalism), and Q_2 (self-sufficiency) resulting in significantly lower mean score values. Thus, both the male and female semi-rural mean score values on certain personality factors deviated significantly from those reported earlier by Cattell and Nesselroade (1967).

Of particular interest in terms of the present emphasis are the findings related to G (Super ego strength), I (Premsia), and Q_2(Self-sufficiency). With regard to superego considerations, both males and females in the present sample scored significantly higher than did the people in the Cattell and Nesselroade study. This may be reflective of the generally conservative nature of the small community, the relatively strong influence of religion as both a spiritual and social experience in the semi-rural community, or perhaps something tangentially related to the highly Germanic family tradition that permeates all aspects of this particular town (LeUnes, 1975). In any case, the present couples tend to be highly conscientious and moralistic, and this may work to their mutual disadvantage in some aspects of their marriages.

In the case of Factor I (Premsia), a muddled picture emerges in that the present couples were significantly different from the Cattell and Nesselroade couples but in reversed form; that is, the semi-rural male was high on this factor with the female being low, in contrast to the Cattell & Nesselroade sample where the male was low and the female high. The net effect is that the males behavior in the present sample was marked by tender-mindedness, overprotectiveness, the tendency to cling to others. and sensitivity. The behavioral tendencies of the females were somewhat tough-minded, self-reliant,

realistic, and no-nonsense oriented. This may reflect the changing vocational patterns among males (moving from agricultural to other perhaps less-prestigious community occupations), changing vocational interests among females (now working instead of being housewives), and a general alteration in traditional female roles both in the present locale and nationally. Because of depressed economic conditions (LeUnes, 1975), males are hard-pressed to provide as they once did when the area was almost entirely an agrarian one. On the other hand, new opportunities await women who desire to work, particularly in light of the opening of a large mental retardation facility in the town. In short, role reversal seems to partially characterize our unstable semi-rural couples.

Concerning Q_2 (Self-sufficiency), the data indicates that our sample couples are significantly lower than the Cattell & Nesselroade pairs. This noted group-dependency may be a function of some of the other points mentioned previously, though the relationship among them is far from clear. Perhaps, some interplay between superego dictates and an unwillingness to violate the wishes of the group is at work here.

The intercorrelations of the semi-rural sample are presented in Table 4.

Insert Table 4 about here

Eight of the factors resulted in positive correlations, eight in negative correlations. Thus, the data on semi-rural couples tends to support Cattell's likeness hypothesis in relation to marital stability. However it is evident in Table 4 that the relationship between the factors differs for the two samples. Only 9 of the 16 personality factor correlations suggest similar relationships (positive vs negative). Therefore, the importance of assessing

the relationship between personality factors in terms of parent population characteristics is readily evident.

The data from this study suggests that the semi-rural couples are quite different from the Cattell & Nesselroade couples. Though the correlations and the three personality factors mentioned have emerged from a host of possibilities that could be discussed, they do serve to substantiate the major thesis of this paper, namely that the development of local norms when using psychometric instruments in marital counseling is strongly indicated.

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Table 1

Interspouse Differences of Unstably Married Couples in a Semi-Rural Setting

Factor	Husbands (N=29)		Wives (N=29)	
	M	SD	M	SD
Primary source traits				
A (Affectothymia)	5.69	2.30	5.62	2.21
B (Intelligence)	5.45	2.10	5.03	1.88
C (Ego-strength)	5.21	2.41	3.69	2.71
E (Dominance)	4.69	2.33	6.24	2.36
F (Surgency)	4.38	1.95	4.69	2.17
G (Superego strength)	7.45	1.64	6.14	1.41
H (Parmia)	4.45	2.34	4.38	2.68
I (Premsia)	6.10	2.32	5.34	2.00
L (Protension)	5.79	2.80	6.17	2.02
M (Autia)	4.31	2.58	5.38	2.58
N (Shrewdness)	4.66	2.14	6.41	2.50
O (Guilt proneness)	5.79	2.47	7.24	2.17
Q_1 (Radicalism)	4.83	2.32	5.69	2.19
Q_2 (Self-sufficiency)	3.48	2.41	3.55	2.31
Q_3 (Self-concept control)	5.55	2.26	5.10	1.90
Q_4 (Ergic tension)	5.76	2.92	6.45	2.57
Demographic data				
Age	34.7	10.07	32.2	9.60
Education	12.24	2.25	11.83	2.45

Table 2

Comparison of Husband Mean Scores

Personality trait	Source	Semi-Rural Husband	Cattell & Nesselroade's (1967) Husband	t
A		5.69	5.00	1.56
B		5.45	5.97	-1.39
C		5.21	4.49	1.93
E		4.69	7.22	-6.28***
F		4.38	4.[illegible]	.48
G		7.45	4.41	7.09***
H		4.45	3.65	1.99
I		6.10	4.22	4.54***
L		5.79	5.27	1.39
M		4.31	6.00	-4.23***
N		4.66	6.00	-3.06**
O		5.79	5.81	-.07
Q_1		4.83	5.86	-2.32*
Q_2		3.48	6.19	-5.49***
Q_3		5.55	6.27	-1.78
Q_4		5.76	6.30	-1.22

*p < .05

**p < .01

***p < .0001

Table 3

Comparison of Wife Mean Scores

Personality Source Trait	Semi-Rural Wife	Cattell & Nesselroade's (1967) Wife	t
A	5.62	6.89	-3.54***
B	5.03	5.57	-1.48
C	3.69	5.68	-4.76****
E	6.24	6.22	0.04
F	4.69	5.27	-1.23
G	6.14	4.51	3.69****
H	4.38	5.19	-1.60
I	5.34	7.32	-4.19****
L	6.17	4.68	3.86****
M	5.38	6.73	-3.55***
N	6.41	5.51	1.98
O	7.24	6.27	2.50*
Q_1	5.69	6.78	-2.59**
Q_2	3.55	6.11	-7.83****
Q_3	5.10	5.41	-.66
Q_4	6.45	7.11	-1.39

*p <.05

**p <.01

***p <.001

****p <.0001

Table 4

Comparison of Husband And Wife

Intercorrelations

Personality Source Traits	Semi-Rural Couples (N = 29)	Cattell & Nesselroade (1967) Couples (N = 37)
A	.33	-.50**
B	-.10	.21
C	.33	.05
E	.17	.31
F	-.01	-.40*
G	.30	.19
H	-.39*	.12
I	.45*	-.13
L	.13	-.33*
M	-.13	-.01
N	.09	.27
O	-.23	.36*
Q_1	-.01	.34*
Q_2	.25	-.32
Q_3	.22	-.02
Q_4	-.01	-.11

*$p < .05$

**$p < .01$